DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 033 CS 010 552

AUTHOR Zamparelli, Debra
TITLE Creating the Habit of Recreational Reading in Third Grade Students through the Development of a Literate Environment, Parent Involvement, and Attitude Adjustment.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 67p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childrens Literature; Classroom Environment; Grade 3; *Parent Participation; Primary Education; Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Habits; *Reading Instruction; *Recreational Reading; Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS Literacy Events

ABSTRACT

A practicum was developed to increase the frequency of recreational reading and improve students' attitudes towards reading. Subjects were 22 third grade students. Literacy activities incorporated included: daily recreational reading periods either with a buddy or alone, reading to children daily, incorporating children's books into content area lessons, a gossip time to discuss books read, and replacement of regular reading instruction with the use of trade books one day per week. A seminar for parents was held to share the importance of recreational reading, the parents' role in the development of this habit in children, and strategies to encourage reading. A reading incentive program involving both parents and children was established. Data concerning the children's recreational reading habits was collected regularly throughout the program. Observations of children's use of free time were made and a survey of children's reading attitudes was conducted at the end of the implementation period. Results indicated that all objectives were reached successfully and surpassed in some areas. Children demonstrated a high frequency of recreational reading, significantly more positive attitudes toward reading, and increased selection of reading as a free-time activity in the classroom. (Eleven tables of data are included and 30 references are attached. Appendixes include questions asked orally of students, Reading Challenge Parent Flyer, Reading Challenge Record Card, books available for literature time and buddy reading, and books used in Social Studies and Science units.) (Author/MG)

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# Creating the Habit of Recreational Reading in Third Grade Students Through the Development of a Literate Environment, Parent Involvement, and Attitude Adjustment

by

Debra Zamparelli

Cluster 35

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A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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ABSTRACT

Developing a Habit of Recreational Reading in Third Grade Students Through the Development of a Literate Environment, Parent Involvement, and Attitude Adjustment. Zamparelli, Debra., 1990: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Recreational Reading/ Reading Attitudes/ Reading Habits/ Reading Motivation/Parent Participation

The goal of this practicum was to help children develop a habit of recreational reading. To accomplish this goal, it was necessary to increase the frequency of recreational reading and improve students' attitudes towards reading.

Several literacy activities were incorporated into the classroom including daily recreational reading periods either with a buddy or alone; reading to children daily; incorporating children's books into content area lessons; a gossip time to discuss books read; and replacement of regular reading instruction with the use of trade books one day per week. A seminar for parents was held to share the importance of recreational reading, the parents' role in the development of this habit in children, and strategies to encourage reading. A reading incentive program involving both the recreational reading of children and parents was established. Data concerning the children's recreational reading habits was collected regularly throughout the program. A survey of children's attitudes toward reading was conducted at the end of the implementation period and observations of children's use of free-time were conducted.

Outcomes of this practicum were very positive. All four objectives were reached successfully and were even surpassed in some areas. The children demonstrated a high frequency of recreational reading accumulating over 96,000 minutes of leisure reading; significantly more positive attitudes toward reading; and increased selection of reading as a free-time activity in the classroom. The data from this practicum demonstrates the importance of: (a) including a daily period of recreational reading in the classroom; (b) educating parents as to the value of leisure reading and strategies to support reading; (c) the value of establishing a reading recognition program to encourage recreational reading; (d) and the importance of establishing leisure reading as a classroom priority.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Description of Work Setting and Community

The community in which this practicum was carried out is 39.38 square miles and home to over 84,000 people. This is the 8th most populated municipality in the state. Geographically, the land is a coastal plain with flat to soft rolling hills. Over half the community is comprised of undeveloped land, which is quickly giving way to encroaching housing developments. The community is a residential community that includes seventeen distinct neighborhoods. There is a broad range of socio-economic levels within the district. The residents are predominantly working class people. There is a strong representation of people with Italian and Irish heritage in this community. Minorities represent 7% of the population of the district.

The school district is comprised of twenty-three

schools that service 11,000 students and employ over 900 teaching staff members. Eighty-five and one-half percent of the student population is Caucasian. Eight percent is Black, and 6.5% is comprised of other ethnic minorities. Seventeen of the twenty-three schools are neighborhood elementary schools serving kindergarten through grade 5, three are middle schools ( 6 -8) and three are high schools. Although located in a suburban district, this district is classified as urban by the state. The elementary schools are neighborhood schools with a traditional structure. Maximum class size is 25 for grades K-3 and 28 for grades four and five. During the 1989-90 school year, the district spent $5,734 per student. This is the second lowest cost per pupil in the county. The proposed budget for 1990-91 is $86.4 million dollars.

## Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school where the practicum took place houses approximately 300 students grades K - 5. There are sixteen classrooms in the school, one resource room and one basic skills room. The children are primarily Caucasian whose parents are members of the working

class. The minority population of this school is approximately 3% of the student body. Most of the minority students are Hispanic, Oriental, or Indian. Typically, both parents are working in blue collar jobs.

The structure of the school is traditional. Each classroom is required to have three reading groups and two mathematics groups, as required by the district. Classes are self-contained. A basal approach to reading is used throughout the school.

The writer is a third grade teacher in the elementary school described above. She is responsible for all basic subjects and coordinates various school wide activities.

# CHAPTER II

## STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

### Problem Description

The Library of Congress designated 1991 as "The Year of the Lifetime Reader" in the United States. The problem addressed by this practicum was that the writer's third grade students spent little of their leisure time reading. They did not seem to have developed a love of reading nor a habit of recreational reading. Although they were successfully learning reading skills, they were not learning to be readers.

The reading program in this district utilized a basal approach. A strong emphasis was placed on standardized achievement scores. The third grade curriculum was expansive with more time required for subjects than was included in the school day. It was mandated that each classroom have three reading groups. Reading and language arts were taught in isolation.

Reading instruction was done solely through the basal reader. There was little time available for storytelling or pleasure reading. Teachers focused on teaching the skill of reading. Recreational reading in the classroom was often done only when all other work was finished.

The problem appeared to be that although children were being taught to read they were not being taught to be readers. Children needed to develop a more positive attitude toward reading, viewing it as a pleasurable and important activity not simply a subject or activity to do only in school.

Efforts had been made to develop positive reading attitudes and reading habits. The school where the practicum took place was involved in the Reading is Fundamental program. A R.I.F. Day was held three times a year. During this time, children were involved in games and selected a book for their very own. Although beneficial, more needed to be done to address this problem.

The writer found that many children did not have positive attitudes toward reading, did not enjoy recreational reading, and did not read outside of school. The children needed to develop a love of reading, experience the joy of discovery and the use of

their imagination. The habit of recreational reading was not facilitated or encouraged by the school program.

## Problem Documentation

When the writer questioned fifteen third grade students, only one child listed reading as one of three favorite activities to do during free time. (see Table 1)

None of the children in the class listed reading as their favorite subject. (see Table 2) When asked if they liked to read, seven out of fifteen students responded negatively.

The students were asked on four different occasions whether they had read outside of school on the previous day. Positive responses were reported by four students on the first occasion. Two positive responses were noted the second time. No students answered positively on the third occasion, and three responded positively on the fourth. (see Table 3)

Table 1

Three Favorite Free Time Activities of Third Grade Students

| Free Time Activities | No. responses |
|---|---|
| Ride Bikes | 5 |
| Play sports | 13 |
| Dance | 3 |
| Play with friend | 7 |
| Talk on the telephone | 1 |
| Watch television | 4 |
| Play Nintendo | 3 |
| Swim | 3 |
| Read | 3 |
| Draw | 1 |
| Go to the park | 1 |

n = 15 *3 = 45

Table 2

Favorite Subject of Third Grade Students

| Subject | No. responses |
|---|---|
| Math | 9 |
| Science | 1 |
| Spelling | 4 |
| Social Studies | 1 |
| Reading | 0 |

n = 15

Table 3

Third Grade Students Reporting Recreational Reading

| Day | No. responses |
|---|---|
| Monday | 4 |
| Friday | 2 |
| Tuesday | 0 |
| Thursday | 3 |

n = 15

The children in the class were also observed for one week. During that time, only three children spent free time reading. The writer noted on parent conference forms that six out of fifteen parents expressed unsolicited concerns that their children did not read at home.

## Causative Analysis

There were numerous factors that contributed to this problem. First, the writer believed that the use of a basal reading series was boring and repetitious. Rasinski (1987) noted that basal stories were less interesting and more difficult to understand when compared with trade books. Reading was segmented. Children could experience failure and embarrassment in this type of program. Children experiencing failure and embarrassment would not find reading enjoyable and probably would not choose to read as a leisure time activity. In this district, the emphasis was on teaching skills. Each teacher was required to divide the class into at least three reading groups and to use a district approved basal for instruction. Scores from standardized tests were very important. The emphasis

was not in developing lifelong readers but in developing reading skills. It is the belief of the writer that children would not find reading presented in this manner rewarding or fun. Second, recreational reading was not an intrinsic part of the curriculum. It was something done when all other work was completed. This type of program and emphasis did not encourage reading to be popularly valued or modeled by fellow students. Additionally, the children were not sufficiently exposed to literature to allow them to explore and discover interests. Chambers (1971) believed that when trade books were used only for free time, the teacher was teaching that the enjoyment of real reading was not important and was, in fact, secondary to the completion of workbook pages and the practice of skills. Other factors contributing to the problem were that parents and teachers were not establishing reading as an important, pleasurable recreational activity and not sufficiently modeling reading for their children. Teachers and parents, pressed for time, might not be reading to their children. Certainly, the teacher's and parent's enthusiasm and regard for the importance of reading must be evident if these feelings are to be exhibited by the children.

Finally, comfortable classroom library corners were all but nonexistent in the writer's district as state monitoring approached. All excess furniture had been removed from the classrooms leaving little beyond desks and chairs.

There are also many other things that competed for children's leisure time. Sports were emphasized heavily in this community. The broad use of television and video games also competed for time.

## Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Morrow and Weinstein (1986) claimed that there is widespread agreement among educators on the importance of encouraging students to develop lifelong, voluntary reading habits. It appears, however, that this goal is not being met with success and that many children are not developing this vital habit. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) found that most subjects did little or no book reading. Greaney (1980) stated that recreational reading is a common objective of elementary schools but found little evidence to support the attainment of this objective. His study of leisure habits of fifth-grade students in Ireland found that

only 5.4% of their leisure time was spent in reading; 22% did not read at all; and 44% did not read books. Walberg and Tsai (1984) similarly found that 44% of American children studied did not read and the median child read only 1 day out of 5. Burgess (1985) surveyed remedial students and found that during the 5-day survey period only four of thirty-two reported having read at home. The results of a survey conducted by the Book Industry Study Group (1984) suggested that the number of readers under the age of 21 decreased from 75% in 1978 to 63% in 1983.

Manning and Manning (1984) claimed that one of the greatest problems in reading is that many students do not read for pleasure and current reading programs do not produce children who love books. Morrow and Weinstein (1986) and Lamme (1976) suggested that the emphasis of most school-based reading programs is skills-oriented and provides little opportunity for students to read for enjoyment. Everett (1987) believed that current types of reading programs, especially basal programs, foster negative attitudes toward reading. Everett (1987) finds basal programs to be especially tedious and monotonous. Morrow's (1986) survey of teachers also suggested that basal programs deemphasize

recreational reading and focus primarily on skill development.

The use of literature appeared limited although the importance has been discussed. Morrow (1982) found few schools provided programs that systematically promoted volunteer reading. Morrow (1982) investigated nursery schools and kindergarten classes and found that most teachers have no regular literature program. He also found that teachers read only occasionally to the children. Morrow (1982) also found that library centers were nonexistent in many classrooms and that no time was set aside for children to use books.

Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) found that teachers had a significant influence on the amount of book reading children do out of school. Morrow (1986) also found that although teachers considered the development of voluntary reading important; it was a considerably lower priority than reading skills, such as comprehension and word recognition. Teachers cited money, time, space, and the pressure to improve standardized test scores as hindrances to classroom activity that would encourage development of voluntary reading according to Morrow (1986) and Stern & Shavelson (1983). Schools assume the responsibility for teaching

literacy skills but not for teaching the enjoyment of reading. Moore, Jones and Miller (1980) also claimed that much time is spent in teaching children to read but little opportunity is provided for children to practice reading.

Home environment also appeared to affect significantly children's recreational reading habits and attitudes toward reading. According to Morrow (1983), recreational readers tend to come from homes where there are books available, reading to the child is frequent, reading is valued as an important activity, parents model voluntary reading, and television viewing is limited.

Stura's (1981) findings imply that television might be conditioning children not to read for enjoyment. Fowler (1988) and Howell & Sylvester (1983) also cite over use of television and video games as a reason for the decline in recreational reading. Cline and Kretke (1980) believe that additional demands on students' leisure time, including sports activities, peer group activities, and homework decrease the amount of leisure time children have in which to read.

There were many reasons noted by researchers contributing to the lack of recreational reading being

done. It was the belief of this writer that all the previously mentioned ideas make some contribution to the continuation of this problem. One major problem, believed the writer, was the lack of commitment on the part of teachers and parents to encourage the development of the habit of recreational reading. The second problem that appeared evident to the writer was that elementary classrooms were not literate environments.

# CHAPTER III

## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

### Goals and Expectations

The following goals were projected for this practicum: students would develop recreational reading habits; and develop a positive attitude toward reading wherein they enjoyed reading and read for pleasure.

### Behavioral Objectives

The two goals of the practicum were to be demonstrated by four objectives projected for this practicum. First, the children would develop positive attitudes toward reading as demonstrate by 16 of 22 students stating they liked to read when presented a question to answer anonymously after the implementation period. Second, the children would enjoy reading recreationally as evidenced by 7 of 22 students listing reading as one of their three favorite free time

activities when presented a question to answer anonymously after the implementation period. Third, the students would develop recreational reading habits as evidenced by 11 out of 22 children reading three days per week as demonstrated by their reading record cards for four out of the eight weeks of the implementation period. Fourth, the environment of the classroom will support and encourage literacy as ascertained by 11 of 22 students would be observed reading sometime during their free time in the classroom during a one week observation period at the end of implementation.

## Measurement of Objectives

To ascertain attitudes toward reading and enjoyment of recreational reading, the children were to answer survey questions anonymously. (see Appendix A) These questions were to be read to the children to allow for children who have difficulty reading and were to be administered at the end of the implementation period. One of the survey questions was open-ended. The other had a yes/no answer. The responses were to be shown on a table denoting the frequency count.

The children's habits of recreational reading

were to be determined by their reading record cards. The writer was to ascertain the rate of recreational reading by compiling and charting the results weekly for each participant noting frequency and the amount of time spent reading. (see Appendix C) The data was to be presented to show results according to sex, reading level, and whole group. Children were also to be observed during the last week of implementation to evaluate literacy environment of the classroom. The researcher was to record observances of students reading in the classroom during unstructured time. This data was to be presented in a table showing days of the week and number of children.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Children were not reading recreationally. They did not have positive attitudes toward reading. They were not developing a habit of recreational reading. Nor was the classroom environment an environment that encouraged literacy. This writer sought to enhance the current mandated program so as to encourage positive attitudes toward reading, develop a literate environment and support the development of recreational reading habits.

Ideas which encouraged positive attitudes and the development of recreational reading were numerous. One frequently used strategy was to initiate a reading incentive program (Burgess, 1985; Dunne, 1985; Manning & Manning, 1984; Morrow & Weinstein, 1986). Dunne (1985) supplemented a reading incentive program with a listening ear, volunteers who listened to the children

tell about the story. A Sustained Silent Reading Program has also been cited frequently as a means of increasing recreational reading (Wiesendanger & Bader, 1989; Cline & Kretke, 1980; Moore, Jones & Miller, 1980).

A relationship between recreational reading habits and home environment has been suggested ( Morrow, 1983; Neuman, 1985). Children who read recreationally came from homes with books. They were encouraged to read, taken to the library, and read to. Morrow (1984) believed that teachers needed support from the students' home environment in order to succeed in developing recreational reading habits.

Holt (1981) believed that to develop recreational reading habits, children must have access to books that will increase their enthusiasm and they must have time to read daily. Blatt (1981) found that teachers were most successful in fostering reading when they gave children time to read; used literature to teach reading; and read aloud regularly to the class. Blatt felt that these practices enabled the teacher to establish a climate in which reading became a significant activity valued and modeled by the students of the classroom. Morrow (1985) agreed that the utilization of literature activities, supported by a well-designed classroom

library would increase voluntary reading. Pablo (1986) listed several steps that she believed were important in developing lifelong readers. She believed that children needed successful experiences with reading; an enthusiastic teacher who encouraged reading; exposure to books to develop interests; access to books and time to read them; read aloud periods; and the use of high interest materials.

It was the belief of the writer that all the solutions mentioned above would contribute to developing positive attitudes toward reading, interest, and ultimately a habit of recreational reading. The solutions chosen were selected because they addressed, the writer believed, the most serious causes of the problem.

## Description and Justification for Solution Selected

It was the belief of the writer that encouraging children to become readers was an important goal that was too easily overlooked. To instill the love of reading in the students, the writer believed that teachers must make recreational reading an intrinsic part of the program. Reading also must be a pleasant

experience for the children. An experience where they were able to meet with success. This process could not be accomplished without the support and encouragement of parents. The solution strategies selected reflected these beliefs.

First, to encourage parental support for recreational reading, it was planned to address the parents concerning the importance of making their children readers. Ideas on how to support and encourage reading were to be shared. Parents were to receive a handout listing a variety of ideas. (see Appendix D) Ideas
to be shared included read aloud time, establishing time for reading at bedtime, library visits, the availability of books, and the importance of modeling. Midway through the implementation period, it was planned that the parents would receive a flyer informing them of the children's progress toward their reading goals. Included in this flyer were reminders of ideas they could incorporate in their home environment to help their children.

Second, the classroom environment needed to be adapted so as to make recreational reading a more focal point in the program. An environment needed to be

developed that supported literacy. The writer planned that basal reading instruction be replaced one day per week by literature. This enhancement of the program would expose the children to a variety of books; allow children to experience books in an atmosphere devoid of stress; allow children to react privately to ideas in print for extended periods of time; emphasize the importance of reading books; and get children involved in reading books. This day was to be called Literature Day.

Time was also to be provided daily for children to read recreationally. The children were scheduled to have fifteen minutes daily to read recreationally. This period was to be called Reader's Choice. Originally, activities during this period were to be alternated between reading alone or with a buddy. Books shared with buddies were to be shared either through silent or oral reading. Five minutes of this time per week was to be spent in Gossip, a time for the children to talk to their classmates about books they have read. Stories were also to be read to the children.

Additionally, storytelling was to be incorporated into the Science and Social Studies programs. Children's books concerning current units, the solar system,

desert, the skin, and weather were to be read to the children and discussed to supplement instruction. The writer chose these strategies to emphasize the importance of recreational reading and to give children time to read. Additionally, it was believed that reading aloud to children developed an attitude where books were valued and used and motivated children to read independently (Anderson, 1984).

Finally, to encourage the development of a habit of recreational reading outside the classroom, the writer planned to invite the students and parents to participate in the Reading Challenge, a reading incentive program. Each child was to record the time he/she spent in recreational reading. Parents were also to be asked to include the duration of their leisure reading. Record cards were to be turned in weekly and progress charted on visual displays throughout the school (see Appendixes B and C) The class planned to try to accumulate 15,000 minutes of recreational reading during the three month period. The time recorded by both parents and students was to be included. Children were to receive rewards for continued reading throughout the program and the class was to decide on a class reward or prize for meeting their goal. The strategies

mentioned above were selected because they would create a literate environment that emphasized the importance of becoming readers. Hopefully, they would also create an environment where the social structure of the classroom encouraged reading. Additionally, these strategies would alter the children's routine and provide the children with more interesting material. This would encourage a more positive attitude toward reading and, hopefully, encourage the development of a habit of recreational reading. The parents were to be included in the practicum to heighten their awareness; encourage their support; and to encourage them to act as models for their children by reading recreationally. The writer hoped that this experience would spark in these students a love of reading that would last throughout their lives.

## Report of Action Taken

During the first week of implementation, the writer met with the parents to discuss the importance of recreational reading and the significant role that parents play in the development of this habit. The value of recreational reading in the development of a

love for reading as well as its contribution to the development of reading skills was discussed. Ideas on how to encourage reading were shared. The importance of a parental model was also discussed as well as other ways to demonstrate the importance of reading books. The parents were given a handout listing a variety of ideas including a family hour, read aloud time, establishing a time for reading at bedtime, library visits, the availability of books in the home, and the importance of modeling. The reading incentive program was also discussed with the parents, who were invited to participate.

Also during the first week of implementation, Readers' Choice was explained to the children and begun. Children spent 15 minutes per day during the first week reading silently. Children chose books and read wherever they were comfortable. It was explained that during the second week, they would choose a book with a buddy and the two would experience a book together either through silent or oral reading. During the third week of the program, the children would hear stories. As the program progressed, it was obvious that some children enjoyed reading alone and some with a buddy. For this reason, the program was adapted. The children chose which type

of reading activity they wished to pursue. The only difficulty encountered was that reading with a buddy was louder and distracted some children wishing to read alone.

During this first week, children asked if they may take home their "Choice" books. So, in addition to the weekly visit to the school library, the children were able to choose and bring home a book from the classroom library whenever they desired. The classroom library consisted of over 150 books. Approximately 40 books were put on display and rotated every three to four weeks. Books were displayed so that children could see the front cover of the book instead of the spine. A daily record of the number of children requesting to borrow books was kept.

During the second week of the practicum, Literature Day was introduced and begun. On Literature Day, a trade book was read either by the whole class or small groups. Groups were mixed and did not reflect the reading groups. Various types of books were read and discussed. An art project followed the completion of each book.

The reading incentive program began at the end of this second week. The program was discussed, goals set, and record cards distributed. A note was sent home to

the parents informing them of the program and inviting them to participate. Children and parents were asked to record the amount of time they spent in recreational reading daily. The form had separate columns for parents and students.

At the end of the week, the children were to bring in the record card. The class tallied the amount of time the class had accumulated and displayed this information on the Beary Good Readers' display. Buddy Bear's footprints up and down the hallways of the school displayed the progress of the children and their parents. The goal of the Reading Challenge was to accumulate 15.000 minutes of recreational reading time. This time was surpassed the second week of the program so a new goal of 75,000 minutes was set. The time recorded by both the students and their parents was included.

Children received rewards of bookmarks and badges for returning their record cards. When the children reached the 25,000 minutes mark, each child received a book. They received another when the 50,000 mark was reached. The children chose there own reward for reaching their goal. The desired reward was a pizza party. All parents that participated in the Reading

Challenge were also invited to this party and all were awarded certificates of participation and thanks.

All activities continued throughout the program. Although scheduled, a midterm report was not issued as this came during a period of school vacation.

Storytelling was also incorporated into the Science and Social Studies programs from the onset of this practicum. Children's books on current units were read to the children and discussed to supplement instruction.

Additionally, the students selected books and read to the kindergarten children. They also wrote books that were included in the classroom library. The children also created a list of favorite books that they read and recommended to peers.

The observations of recreational reading and questionnaires were administered during the last week of implementation.

The greatest roadblock to this practicum was time. It was difficult to fit in even fifteen minutes of recreational reading daily. The writer believes that there must be real dedication and belief in the importance of this goal on the part of the teacher or administrator in order for any plan of this type to be effective.

# CHAPTER V

# RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Results

The problem in the writer's classroom was that the children, although developing reading skills, were not becoming "readers". They were not choosing to read recreationally in the classroom during free time nor were they reading for pleasure at home. The writer chose to incorporate a number of strategies to increase enjoyment, importance, and frequency of recreational reading. Strategies utilized were:

1. A training session was provided for parents on how and why to encourage recreational reading.

2. A reading incentive program, Reading Challenge, that charted the recreational reading of both students and parents was initiated.

3. The development of a literacy environment in the classroom through: (a) a daily recreational reading period, Readers' Choice; (b) reading orally to the

students; (c) a weekly activity, Literature Day, where the children, as a class, read and discussed a trade book; (d) and the use of children's books in Social Studies, Science, and Health units was initiated.

Additional activities included a classroom lending library where books were displayed with covers visible and new books introduced frequently; a monthly period where children chose books to read orally to younger children, Little Buddies; and publishing books of students' stories and including these in the classroom library.

The goals of the practicum were demonstrated by four objectives.

1. The children would develop positive attitudes toward reading as demonstrated by 16 of 22 students stating they liked to read when presented a question to answer anonymously after the implementation period.

The children were surveyed at the end of the implementation period. All the children, 22 out of 22, responded positively that they enjoyed reading when presented this question to answer anonymously.

Table 4

Attitudes Toward Reading as Related at the End of the Implementation Period

| Group | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| Girls | 9 | 0 |
| Boys | 13 | 0 |
| Total | 22 | 0 |

2. The children would enjoy reading recreationally as evidenced by 7 of 22 students listing reading as one of their three favorite free time activities when presented a question to answer anonymously after the implementation period.

The children were surveyed at the end of the implementation period and anonymously reported their three favorite free time activities. Twenty of the twenty-two children reported reading as one of their three favorite things to do in their free time.

Table 5

Number of Children Listing Reading as One of Three Favorite Free Time Activities at the End of the Implementation Period

| Group | Boys | Girls |
|---|---|---|
| Above Average | 4 | 4 |
| Average | 6 | 1 |
| Below Average | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 11 | 9 |

Note. The total number of boys is 13. The total number of girls is 9.

3. The students would develop recreational reading habits as evidenced by 11 out of 22 children reading at least three days per week as demonstrated by their reading record cards for four out of the eight weeks of the implementation period.

The reported reading of each student was charted throughout the implementation period. Over 11 students

read for at least three days per week for each week of the implementation period. The minimum number of students satisfying the criteria were 17 on weeks two and eight. A mode and median of 18 children read at least three days per week for the eight weeks of implementation as shown on Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Children Reporting Number of Days Per Week Engaged in Recreational Reading

| | No. of Days | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 10 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 11 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 12 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| 7 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| 8 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 13 |

Note. Total N=22

Table 7

Children Successfully Meeting Criteria by Reading at Least Three Days Per Week

| Group | Weeks | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Girls | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| Boys | 11 | 8 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 9 |
| Total | 20 | 17 | 21 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 18 | 17 |

Note. Total N=22.

4. The environment of the classroom will support and encourage literacy as ascertained by observing 11 of 22 students reading sometime during their free time in the classroom during a one week observation period at the end of implementation.

During a five day observation period: on day 1, 12 out of twenty-two children were observed reading; on day 2, 11 children were observed reading; on the third day, 16 children were observed reading; on day 4, 10 children were observed reading, and on day 5, 11

children chose to read during free time in the classroom. Free time in the classroom was defined as a time when the children had finished all compulsory work. It should be noted, there were variations in the amount of work the children were assigned and the amount of time allotted for completion of assigned work. Approximately twenty learning centers were also available for children to use.

Table 8

Children Observed Reading In the Classroom as Free Time Activity

| Group | Day | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Boys | 7 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| Girls | 5 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 12 | 11 | 16 | 10 | 11 |

Note. Total N=22

## Discussion

All objectives of this practicum were successfully met. It appears techniques utilized in this practicum do encourage a positive attitude toward reading and encourage the development of a habit of recreational reading. Students frequently discussed books that they were reading and sought out other books of authors that they enjoyed. Children began donating books that they enjoyed to the classroom library. Several parents commented on the interest their children were displaying in reading and in books. Even parents that the writer is unfamiliar with sought her out to solicit ideas on how to encourage their children to read and what types of books were appropriate.

Morrow and Weinstein (1986) suggested that if teachers create a supportive physical environment and carry out literature activities designed to increase interest in books, behavioral changes can be seen. As noted in Tables 7, 8 and the previous paragraph, behavioral changes were observed.

The writer also surveyed the children five times during the two weeks following termination of the reading incentive program to see if reading

continued. Again the number of positive responses were very encouraging as noted in Table 9.

Table 9

Leisure Reading Activity of Students After Culmination of Incentive Program

| Day | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 13 | 8 |
| 2 | 19 | 3 |
| 3 | 18 | 3 |
| 4 | 17 | 3 |
| 5 | 19 | 3 |

The indications of the data collected during this practicum are in agreement with much of the research on recreational reading. Morrow and Weinstein's (1986) observations were similar to the responses of the writer's students in that there was a significant rise in the frequency of reading in classroom free-time after implementation of the program. Morrow and Weinstein

(1986) and Neuman (1986) found that girls chose to read more often than boys. This was also found to be true in this practicum. Girls read a mean of 6 days per week throughout the study. The median and mode of the days per week that the girls read was 7. The boys read for a mean of 5 days per week. The mode of the boys' reading was 7 days per week and the median was 5. The girls also spent more time reading recreationally. The girls spent a mean of 336 minutes per week reading whereas the boys spent a mean of 141 minutes per week reading.

Morrow and Weinstein (1986) also found no differences in reading frequency based on children's level of reading achievement. The results of this practicum also show little difference. The children in the above average group read a mean of 5 days per week. The median for this group was 7 days per week. The average group read a mean of 6 days per week. The median of the group was also 7 days per week. The below average group also read a mean of 5 days per week with a median of 5 days. There does appear to be some difference in the amount of time spent in reading for each group. The above average readers spent a mean of 239 minutes per week reading. The average group spent 334 minutes per week reading recreationally. The below

average group spent only 136 minutes per week reading for pleasure. It is interesting to note that the average readers spent more time reading recreationally than the above average readers. One possible explanation for this could be the participation of their parents in the reading incentive program. All the parents of the average readers participated each week in the Reading Challenge. This was not true of the parents of the above average readers. It is important to note that this data is a result of time spent reading as reported by students and their parents.

In examining the frequency of recreational reading in the classroom, there appeared to be little distinction between sexes or ability levels.

Table 10

Reading Challenge Results: Days Per Week

| Group | Mean | Median |
|---|---|---|
| Above Average | 5 | 7 |
| Average | 6 | 7 |
| Below Average | 5 | 5 |

Table 11

Reading Challenge Results: Minutes Per Week

| Group | Mean Number of Minutes |
|---|---|
| Above Average | 239 |
| Average | 334 |
| Below Average | 136 |

In summation, all objectives of this practicum were met satisfactorily. It appears that the combination of parental awareness and involvement and classroom innovation does encourage more positive attitudes toward reading and a habit of recreational reading.

Pablo (1986) states that three things initially influence the reading habits of children, the enthusiasm of their teacher, parental expectations, and peer example. We, as educators, must do all that we can to encourage and provide an environment that will encourage the development of children who want to read. Although many teachers reported the importance of developing recreational reading habits, most viewed it below the teaching of reading skills. Teachers need to reevaluate

this hierarchy. As Pablo (1985, p.50) states, " The true test of our success or failure in teaching children to read is not found in the results of a battery of tests but in the reading habits of these children twenty years from now. Will we have taught them to be readers or only to read?"

## Recommendations

Plans to further the solution in my work setting include addressing the parent association at a meeting on the importance of developing recreational reading habits; developing and implementing a reading incentive program for the school; and developing and distributing a list of favorite books as suggested by the children in my class during conference time in the spring.

All aspects of this program will continue throughout the year in the writer's classroom. The only change will be in the reading recognition program. A new program will begin this month to acknowledge children's reading.

Roettger (1980) asked students what they believed should be done to help children learn to like to read.

The most frequent response was that children should have time to read their own books every day. The students also suggested that teachers should tell children about interesting books and set aside time for the children to talk to the teacher or each other about the books they had read.

The writer believes, as does Pumfrey (1988), that some form of silent reading should be incorporated into the school day, a well designed classroom library is very important, books from the classroom library should be circulated and taken home to enjoy, teachers need to encourage use of books.

The writer truly believes in the importance of the goals expressed in this practicum but feels that a longer duration of intervention is necessary. It would be interesting to observe this or any class where intervention has taken place to see if parents continue to emphasize and model the importance of recreational reading and if the children continue to read recreationally to the same degree.

The writer believes that others wishing to increase and improve attitudes toward reading, need to make a commitment to the goal. This commitment must be translated into enthusiasm in the classroom. This, the

writer believes, is key.

## Dissemination

This practicum and its results have been shared with the other staff members of my school and with a district committee. Enthusiasm about developing this into a school wide program has been expressed. One classroom has already utilized the idea of Literature Day.

Criteria suggested by Pablo (1986) states that a successful literary experience is whether children read by choice, of their own free will, in their free time; whether they listen eagerly when books are read to them; and whether they respond to a story by sharing their feelings and opinions about it. Using this criteria, this practicum has been a successful experience. It has not only met the criteria for the objectives but has encouraged an environment where discussion of books is common, and children choose to read on their own in their free time.

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# APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONS ASKED ORALLY OF STUDENTS

1. Name three things that you like to do in your free time.
2. Do you like to read?

# APPENDIX B

## READING CHALLENGE PARENT FLYERS

Dear Parents,

One gift that all children should receive is the love of reading. I believe that it is important for your children to develop not only the skill of reading but to become readers. For this reason, it is important to encourage children to develop the habit of reading for pleasure. As their parents, you will have the greatest effect on the reading attitudes and habits your children develop. The value you place on reading and your own reading habits will greatly influence your children.

To encourage the development of recreational reading habits, the children will be encouraged to participate in the Reading Challenge. The class will chart the amount of time they spend reading for fun. The children will try, as a class, to accumulate 15,000 minutes of recreational reading during a three month period. You can help the class accumulate time and also model this important behavior to your children. The children and I invite you, the <u>parents,</u> to also chart your reading time to help us accomplish our goal.

Parents, thank you for your support. The children and I look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Dear Parents,

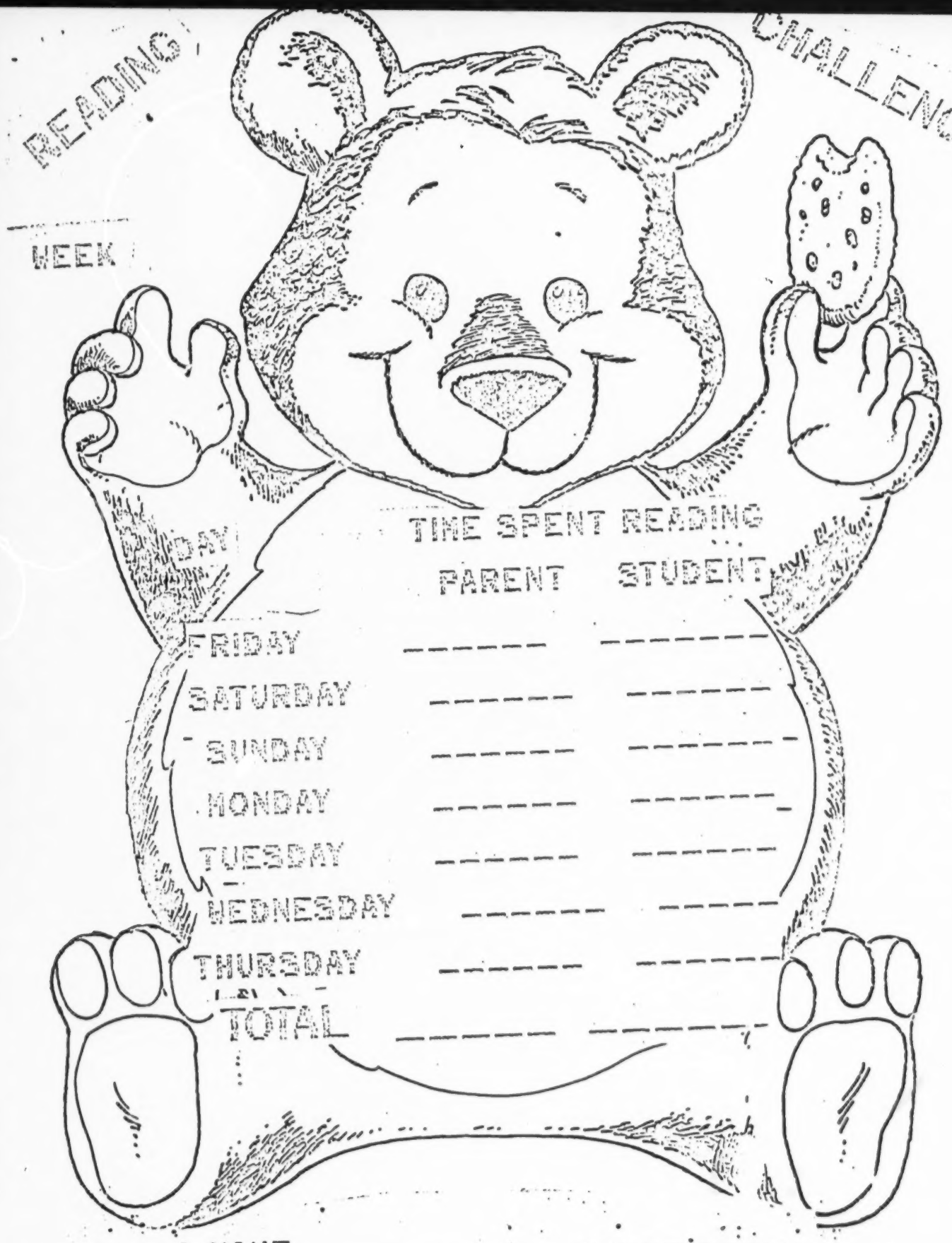
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP YOUR CHILD ENJOY READING MORE AND BECOME A BETTER READER?

Here are some suggestions on how to do it.....

1. Read aloud to and with your child.
2. Share your thoughts and ideas with your child and encourage them to do the same with you.
3. Relate readings to family experiences.
4. Make reading relaxing and enjoyable. Touch your child when they are reading. Sit close together, hug, and praise them.
5. Provide a model for your child by reading on your own.
6. Take your child to the library.
7. Give your children books as gifts.
8. Subscribe to children's magazines.
9. Set time aside for family discussions or reading.
10. Allow your child 15 minutes after bedtime in their romm with the lights on so that they can read.
11. Have books in your home that your child is able to read.

# APPENDIX C

## READING CHALLENGE RECORD CARD






BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# APPENDIX D

## BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR LITERATURE TIME AND BUDDY READING

| Book | Author |
|---|---|
| Song and Dance Man | Karen Ackerman |
| Mouse and the Motorcycle | Beverly Cleary |
| Ralph S. Mouse | Beverly Cleary |
| Ramona and Her Father | Beverly Cleary |
| Ramona the Brave | Beverly Cleary |
| Ramona the Pest | Beverly Cleary |
| The Magic Schoolbus at the Waterworks | Joanna Cole |
| Helen Keller | Margaret Davidson |
| Legend of Bluebonnet | Ill. by Tomie DePaola |
| Misty of Chincoteague | Marguerite Henry |
| The Return of the Third Grade Ghosthunters | Grace Maccarone |
| Sarah, Plain and Tall | Patricia MacLachlan |
| Miss Nelson is Back | James Marshall |
| Miss Nelson is Missing | James Marshall |
| Curious George | H.A. Rey |
| When I Was Young in the Mountains | Cynthia Rylant |
| Panky and William | Nancy Saxon |
| I'm Terrific | Marjorie W. Sharmat |
| Ritch Mitch | Marjorie W. Sharmat |
| Encyclopedia Brown Carries On | Donald J. Sobol |
| Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter | John Steptole |

| | |
|---|---|
| Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs | Walt Disney Prod. |
| The Boxcar Children | Gertrude C. Warner |
| Stuart Little | E.B. White |
| Little House in the Big Woods | Laura Ingalls Wilder |
| On the Banks of Plum Creek | Laura Ingalls Wilder |
| Owl Moon | Jane Yolen |

# APPENDIX E

## BOOKS USED IN SOCIAL STUDIES AND SCIENCE UNITS

| Books | Author |
| --- | --- |
| What is the Moon? | Chris Arvetis |
| Why is the Sky Blue? | Chris Arvetis |
| Is there Life in Outer Space | Franklyn M. Branley |
| Snow is Falling | Franklyn M. Branley |
| The Sun: our nearest star | Franklyn M. Branley |
| What Makes Day and Night | Franklyn M. Branley |
| A Map is a Picture | Barbara Rinkoff |
| A Book to Begin On Hawaii | Juliet Morgan Swenson |